

# Ministry Discernment Guidelines

*For persons seeking to be accepted as postulants in the Diocese of British Columbia.*

## Introduction

While all baptized persons are called to ministry as part of their baptismal covenant (also called lay ministry or the ministry of all believers), so are also called into the ordained ministry of deacon or priest.

Part of the discernment process is to be accepted as a postulant with the diocese. A postulant is a person who has gone through the diocesan discernment process, been recommended at each stage to continue exploring the possibility of ordination, and has been recognized by the bishop as a postulant. Such recognition does not guarantee ordination, rather it acknowledges yet another stage in the discernment process.

Those who feel called to ordained ministry are invited to test that vocation in a journey of discernment with the diocesan Ministry Discernment Team.

## Guidelines

- I. The following are prerequisites for any person wanting to be considered for postulancy in the Anglican Church of Canada:
  - a) Confirmation, reception or status as a communicant in the Anglican Communion at least three years prior to the application for consideration as a postulant.
  - b) Regular participation in the life and worship of a parish or recognized worshipping community of the Anglican Church for at least one year prior to the application for consideration as a postulant.

*—House of Bishops' Guidelines 2*

## Process

- II. Normally every person desiring to be admitted as a postulant, who has satisfied the above prerequisites is expected to consult with and seek guidance from their current priest.
- III. The applicant then makes an appointment with the bishop to discuss the applicant's sense of call, the meaning of ordination, the various forms ordained ministry can take and the requirements for each. If the applicant is to process with the discernment process, the bishop will provide contact details for the applicant to the chair of the diocesan Ministry Discernment Team and also ask that a parish discernment group be established. The chair of the Ministry Discernment Team will ask a member of the team to attend one of the first meetings on the parish discernment group to explain the discernment process.

## Ministry Discernment Guidelines

- IV. In consultation with their priest, the applicant will establish the parish discernment group consisting of the incumbent, other clergy in the parish, and four to six lay people known to the applicant. The group will meet at least twice with the applicant to assist with the discernment process.

If the group is satisfied that the individual is suitable for consideration as a postulant, they will send to the bishop a letter of commendation (found online [here](#)), providing information about the following:

- a) Length of time the individual has been known by the referees and a description of their association with the individual.
- b) A description of the ways the individual has helped build community and exercise leadership in the parish.
- c) Particular gifts and attributes the individual possesses which make them particularly suited to ordained ministry.
- d) Any limitations or concerns which may hinder the individual in the exercise of ordained ministry.
- e) Ways in which the referees have observed the person's ability to balance their own internal life with that of the community.
- f) Any further counsel the referees wish to share with the bishop.

—House of Bishops' Guidelines 4

The bishop will inform the chair of the Ministry Discernment Team and the team will assign a mentoring chaplain to accompany the individual as they continue the discernment process. The bishop may at this point, or at any subsequent time, seek the commendation of another parish to which an applicant may be referred by the bishop.

—House of Bishops' Guidelines 5

## **Ministry Discernment Guidelines**

- V. In addition to the parish commendation letter, the applicant will be expected to complete an application form which includes a biographical sketch, and to complete a Criminal Record Check unless a current one is already on file with the synod office. The completed application will be forwarded to the diocesan Ministry Discernment Team for consideration.
- VI. Once the application has been reviewed, the applicant will be invited to attend the Ministry Discernment Weekend which takes place in the fall of each year. Here a team assesses the applicant's perception of call to ordained ministry.
- VII. The diocesan Ministry Discernment Team is advisory to the bishop and reports the findings from the weekend directly to the bishop for consideration.
- VIII. The bishop will then meet with the applicant to discuss options. When the applicant is approved to proceed, the bishop will inform the applicant.
- IX. If the applicant is to continue in the process they will attend a Provincial ACPO (Advisory Committee on Postulants for Ordination) weekend or, in the case of the diaconate, to participate in training for that role.

At this time, the applicant may be asked to undergo a psychological assessment and will be required to provide more comprehensive information similar to what was provided in the application.